

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001789

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PD (COX, VEASY), AF/S (SCHLACHTER), AF/RA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT GMO FOOD; HARARE

1. A press conference held on July 24 by Roger Winter, Assistant Administrator at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), received blanket coverage by the local print and electronic media, including foreign news agencies - Reuters, Associated Press (AP) and Agence France Presse (AFP). The July 25 edition of the government-controlled daily "The Herald" reported the event under headline "U. S. urges Zim to accept genetically modified food." The July 25 edition of the independent daily "The Daily News" preferred Reuter copy under headline "Zimbabwe faces famine if Mugabe delays decision on GMO food aid." The independent weekly "The Sunday Mirror" ran an article about the press conference under headline "Gvt. Refuses USAID demands on GMOs." An interview with Andrew Natsios, USAID Administrator, via satellite television made the front page of the July 28 edition of the independent weekly "The Standard," under headline "U. S. warns Zim on food aid." Article excerpts follow.

2. Under headline "U. S. urges Zim to accept genetically modified food" the "Herald" (07/25) reported:

"The U. S. on Tuesday urged Zimbabwe to accept genetically modified food to avert famine caused by drought, which has affected southern Africa. Assistant administrator at USAID Mr. Roger Winter told reporters in Harare that although the issue of genetically modified food was controversial, the food could avert famine. However, the government has banned genetically modified food in the country since studies were still being conducted on the new technology. Last week, local researchers said Zimbabwe should not be quick to embrace the new technology as this would affect the county's beef markets in Europe and elsewhere. . . ."

Under headline "Zimbabwe faces famine if Mugabe delays decision on GMO food aid" the "Daily News" (07/25) reported:

"Zimbabwe could have a famine on its hands by September if President Mugabe's government delays a decision on whether to accept genetically modified food aid, a senior African aid official said on Tuesday. Roger Winter. . . said Zimbabwe had 'expressed concerns' over genetically modified organism (GMO) foods, limiting the amount of food the agency can bring in to help feed thousands of needy people. 'We do not have other products that do not have GMO in the volumes and within the time frames that are necessary to keep the food pipeline full,' Winter told journalists in Harare. . . 'The volumes that the U. S. is offering to supply cannot be made up for by any other country or group. As of right now, most traditional humanitarian donors for this kind of emergency have yet to step up to the plate,' Winter said. . . ."

Under headline "Gvt. Refuses USAID demands on GMOs" the independent "Sunday Mirror" (07/28) ran the following article by the paper's News Editor, Innocent Chofamba-Sithole:

"The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has cited the government's refusal to accept Genetically Modified (GMO) food aid as a major stumbling block in its efforts to avert a looming famine that threatens over six million lives countrywide. But the government has dismissed this perception as erroneous, and reiterated its position on both GMO food and calls by donor countries and organizations for the implementation of market-based macro-economic policies to enable private food merchants to help address the food crisis. Addressing a press conference last week, a visiting U. S. official Roger Winter, said Zimbabwe's policy environment presented complications that hampered timeous (sic) and adequate responses to a food crisis that is expected to blossom into full scale famine by September. 'We recognize that every state in this

region has the right to receive or not to receive GMO food, but this is what the U. S. has to offer. . . We do not have other products, and in the volumes required to meet the demand triggered by the food crisis,' Rogers said. . . ."

Under headline "U. S. warns Zim on food aid" the independent weekly "The Standard" (07/28) carried the following article by Zwakele Sayi:

"The U. S. has said it will not deal with the ZANU PF government in the provision of food aid to hundreds of thousands of famine-stricken Zimbabweans, and has warned that it will withdraw its assistance altogether should the Mugabe regime meddle with aid from that country. The warning comes in the wake of increasing reports that Mugabe's ZANU PF party is using donor food aid to gain political mileage and to settle scores with supporters of the opposition MDC (Movement for Democratic Change). In a live dialogue program. . . Andrew Natsios, the administrator of USAID, said political inference in the distribution of food aid had prompted his country to deal solely with church organizations. . . Natsios said contingency measures were being undertaken to ensure that the aid coming into Zimbabwe reached all intended beneficiaries, not just ZANU PF apologists. . . ' We are in the process of negotiating with the Zimbabwean government to cease using the aid to lure votes from the starving and vulnerable,' he said. . . ."

13. Meanwhile today's (August 1) edition of the independent weekly "The Financial Gazette" carries an article on page one declaring that the government has made a u-turn on GMO food aid. Excerpts:

"The government this week backtracked on its decision to reject GMO food in the face of mass hunger, agreeing to take in 20,000 tons of maize donated by the U. S. after being told the food would be diverted elsewhere,. . . Michael Foster, the USAID program officer in Harare, yesterday said Social Welfare Minister July Moyo had this week undertook in writing to accept the food without any certification that it was free of GMO. 'We had a meeting on Tuesday with officials from the Labor and Social Welfare Ministry and we got a letter from the permanent secretary of that ministry signed by Moyo saying the government will take the food,' Foster told the 'Financial Gazette. . . .' Foster said it was still unclear whether Harare's acceptance of the USAID food donations signaled a permanent shift of policy on GMO foods. . . ."

SULLIVAN